

I support media diversity

I am writing to you today to comment on Docket No. 02-277, The Biennial Review of the FCC's broadcast media ownership rules. In its goals to promote competition, diversity and localism in today's media market, I strongly believe that the FCC should retain all of the current media ownership rules now in question. These rules serve the public interest by limiting the market power of already huge companies in the broadcast industry.

I do not believe that the studies commissioned by the FCC accurately demonstrate the negative affects media deregulation and consolidation have had on media diversity. While there may be indeed be more sources of media than ever before, the spectrum of views presented have become more limited.

The Commission is considering possible changes to broadcast rules which were put in place by Congress to ensure that the public will have access to a wide range of news, information, programming, and diverse political views. Repeal or significant modification of these rules will open the door to numerous mergers that would reduce competition and diversity in the media and thereby, create dominant influence.

Allowing media dominance to flourish unchecked does damage to any democracy that depends on the expression of multiple opinions to balance informed debate. The public is already suffering in the form of biased news representation.

Last fall C-Span televised a public forum on news broadcast programming. The panelists were the CEOs of the programming departments of the major TV news Stations. The Audience was composed of journalists. During the question and answer period, a journalist asked the panel why there was such a blackout regarding the Israel-Palestine news coverage in the US. The programming CEO, representing CNN, offered the following response: That if the American public does not like the slant or bias of CNN's news coverage they were free to go elsewhere. This is an appalling comment. I don't believe that the news and information dissemination of this country should be dependent on corporate predatory interests. We need more voices, not less, and we need some system of accountability. You must stop these mergers now. Dominant influence threatens our Democracy at its core and the relaxing of horizontal cap regulation will stimulate more dominance, not less.

The rules have been relaxed too far. The public interest has already been damaged. The public's broadcast media has been entrusted to you to protect for the public's benefit. These proposed changes would cause more harm, less accountability and fewer viewpoints broadcasted over more channels. I entreat you not to relax these regulations further, until unbiased studies can be conducted and public input can be gathered. More mergers will create fewer voices with undue influence, which will weaken the number and variety of opinions that keep this democracy healthy.

The FCC purpose is to act as an advocate for the protection of the public's media. The public's interest should be your largest concern while making any decision on their behalf. When corporate interests conflict with and diverge from the public interests, as is the case with any more mergers (i.e.: raising any more caps), your obligation is to the public, not to the corporations. When you allow only corporate

predatory interests to represent their arguments to your commission and prevent the public from representing theirs you are no longer carrying out the duties of your office. The public interest is not being served when the majority of the public has not even been informed that such important decisions are being made on their behalf. Please, I urge you to put off the decision on these regulations until the public has had time to make their arguments be heard.

In addition, I would like to suggest a proposal that would better serve the public trust and that is: the lease renewal process be predicated on advancing the public interests (i.e. review process). That would be a change for the better for all Americans.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this letter. I would also like to thank the Honorable Jonathan Steven Adelsteine and the Honorable Michael J. Copps for providing some of the public forums that alerted me to the issues that were about to be decided by the commission.

Sincerely,
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